

Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

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FM AMEMBASSY CAPE TOWN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4456

INFO AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM

AMCONSUL DURBAN

AMEMBASSY GABORONE

AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

AMEMBASSY MASERU

AMEMBASSY MBABANE

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

UNCLAS CAPE TOWN 0264

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINS, PFOR, SF, RH

SUBJECT: SAG CONCERN ABOUT EFFECTS OF SITHOLE DETENTION

1. IN FORTHRIGHT STATEMENT IN PARLIAMENT MARCH 7, FOREIGN
MINISTER HILGARD MULLER REVEALED SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT'S
CONCERN THAT ARREST OF REVEREND NDABANINGI SITHOLE COULD BE
SETBACK TO SETTLEMENT IN RHODESIA. MULLER MADE IT
CLEAR THAT SAG FELT SITHOLE SHOULD BE BROUGHT BEFORE AN
ORDINARY CRIMINAL COURT AND TRIED ACCORDINGLY. MULLER SAID:
"TOGETHER WITH PRESIDENT TOLBERT AND OTHERS WHO WANT
PEACEFUL SOLUTIONS FOR THE PROBLEMS OF AFRICA, WE ARE
AWAITING THE OUTCOME OF THE JUDICIAL INQUIRY ALREADY
ANNOUNCED (BY IAN SMITH). WE ALL REALIZE THAT MR. SMITH
AND HIS GOVERNMENT HAVE MANY PROBLEMS, BUT WE HOPE THEY
WILL OVERCOME THESE PROBLEMS AND THAT IT WILL BE POSSIBLE
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FOR A CRIMINAL TRIAL TO BE HELD."

2. POSSIBLY AS A DIRECT RESULT OF SITHOLE'S ARREST, SOUTH AFRICAN SECRETARY FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS, BRAND FOURIE, FLEW TO LUSAKA LAST WEEK FOR DISCUSSION WITH ZAMBIAN OFFICIALS. AT ABOUT SAME TIME, RHODESIAN MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND DEFENSE, P.K. VAN DER BYL, CAME TO CAPE TOWN, APPARENTLY TO BRIEF SAG ON CURRENT SITUATION IN RHODESIA.

3. WRITING IN SUNDAY TIMES MARCH 9, POLITICAL COLUMNIST STANLEY UYS SAID THAT SAG OFFICIALS ARE "DEEPLY WORRIED OVER MR. SITHOLE'S ARREST," FEARING IT MAY WRECK CHANCES FOR SETTLEMENT. THUS SMITH GOVERNMENT WOULD HAVE TO PROVE "TO THE HILT" THE CHARGE AGAINST SITHOLE THAT HE WAS PLOTTING TO ASSASSINATE HIS POLITICAL RIVALS IN THE ANC. ANOTHER EXPRESSION OF CONCERN WAS CONTAINED IN DIE BURGER ARTICLE MARCH 8, WHICH STATED: "IF THE CHARGE (AGAINST MR. SITHOLE) CANNOT BE PROVED 100 PER CENT, MR. SITHOLE'S DETENTION CAN SERVE ONLY TO UNITE BLACK OPINION BEHIND HIM. IT WOULD BE A GREAT VICTORY FOR THE HAWKS, NOT ONLY IN RHODESIA, BUT OVER THE SHOULDER OF AFRICA."

4. ACCORDING TO SPOKESMAN FOR PRIME MINISTER VORSTER'S OFFICE, VORSTER RECEIVED CONFIDENTIAL MESSAGE FROM LIBERIA'S PRESIDENT TOLBERT MARCH 7. ALTHOUGH SPOKESMAN WOULD MAKE NO COMMENT ABOUT CONTENTS OF MESSAGE, PRESS QUOTES "SENIOR POLITICIANS" AS SAYING THAT TOLBERT HAS URGED VORSTER TO DO SOMETHING TO KEEP THE TALKS GOING IN RHODESIA.

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